

THE CHAPLAIN'S TRANSPORTATION
ON THE NUCLEAR BATTLEFIELD

Advanced Class 60 - 1

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PREFACE

To paraphrase the prophet Amos, the writer is not a transportation expert, nor is he the son of a transportation expert. However, as has been the experience of practically every other Chaplain in the service, he has had to cope with problems of transportation in the field in simulated battle conditions -- as well as in combat -- and has experienced some of the frustrations which are occasioned by those transportation problems.

In this paper the writer has attempted to analyze some of the problems, particularly as they relate to his living and working conditions on the nuclear battlefield. Simulated conditions, even in the most realistic exercise or maneuver, can but approximate reality, and consequently there is little basis for sound or firm doctrine as to the precise role a Chaplain will play in event of all-out nuclear warfare. However, his primary mission, "To lead men to God and to bring God to men", will forever be the same. It is to this mission that this paper is directed -- to aid the Chaplain in providing adequate services and ministrations to the men of his unit. The success of that mission will depend in no small measure upon his ability to reach them in their widely dispersed positions and under circumstances constantly fraught with the danger of exposure to the devastation of nuclear weapons.

The conclusions reached by the writer are not necessarily the best answer, but perchance when the experience of other Chaplains has been pooled in a great reservoir of information and educated opinion the ultimate answer will be forthcoming.

No attempt has been made to formalize this paper by breaking it down into an outline form. However, the writer has attempted to present a flowing account of the subject matter in such a manner that sequential developments from the beginning to the end fall into a logical pattern. For the most part it is narrative in nature. Background material was drawn largely from Honeywell's Chapleins in the United States Army, while the latter part is generally based upon the writer's sixteen years of military Chaplaincy.

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The time was early May of the year 1958; the place was the Yakima Firing Range in the State of Washington; the circumstances, friendly US Forces, spearheaded by the "Famous 4th" United States Infantry Division, were assigned the mission of stemming the tide of Aggressor Forces, which, having landed in the vicinity of the Columbia River mouth, had swept up the Columbia against little organized resistance and now stood poised to the South of Yakima ready to push Northward across the Cascades and down the easy approaches to the major shipping center of the Great Northwest, the city of Seattle, Washington. "Exercise Indian River", the first major testing of the newly reorganized Pentomic "4th", was under way. Not only were the division's infant Battle Groups to receive their simulated "baptism by fire", but for the first time nuclear weapons were to play a major role alongside their conventional cousins. The new concepts of battle procedure, occasioned by these nuclear question marks, were to dominate the scene for the several days of the exercise. The several thousand officers and men of the division had been primed by months of training, and they were ready, eager, and, it was hoped, able.

The writer was then Senior Chaplain of the 1st Battle Group, 22d Infantry, rounding out his third year with the unit. Ours was a rather disappointing mission in that we were in a reserve status, a situation made next to embarrassing by the fact two sister Battle Groups, bitter rivals with whom we had clashed

repeatedly on the football gridiron and baseball diamond, were to share the glory of repulsing the Aggressor and destroying him before he could further violate the soil of our beloved land. Even the fact that the 22d had been airlifted from the home base to the "battle scene" in a highly successful operation failed to lift the sagging morale of the unit as reports came in from the "fighting" front indicating that the sister Battle Groups were giving a commendable accounting of themselves.

And then it happened! The writer was visiting in the area of "Charlie" Company, approximately five miles from the Battle Group Headquarters, when the tell-tale "mushroom" cloud floated up from the hills in the general location of our "Delta" Company, located about midway between Headquarters and "Charlie" Company. We couldn't move up to the "fight" but it had come to us. Half an hour later an Aggressor Armored/Infantry Task Force over-ran the "Delta" position and almost simultaneously Aggressor troops were landed in force by helicopter to join them in a sweep down the ridge in the general direction of the Battle Group HQ.

It was learned later that the Headquarters Company Recon Platoon had managed to stall the oncoming Aggressor for a time sufficient for the Battle Group HQ to withdraw to more secure ground. However, when the writer rejoined the unit some several hours later -- a delay occasioned by the necessity for following a circuitous route to evade the "enemy" -- he discovered that in the hasty withdrawal the Chaplain's tent and equipage had been left to the "enemy". That it was recovered twenty four hours later "administratively" is only incidental.

It should be noted here that this was but the first of two such occurrences in which the Chaplain "lost" everything but the clothing on his back during the course of this one exercise. It was to happen on one other occasion while on maneuvers in Korea, but it is not the purpose of this paper to relate "war stories".

The scene has been set for the real purpose of this paper, namely a consideration of the Chaplain's transportation as it affects his living and working conditions while performing his mission on the nuclear battlefield. In the course of this paper the writer shall give due consideration to the problem of transportation as it has been met in the past, the present situation, and finally certain recommendations as to how it might be met in the future. Changing situations have ever necessitated changed concepts, and we are now in a period of drastic change, necessitating a drastic re-evaluation of the Chaplain's requirements transportation-wise. However, we shall attempt to keep our feet on the ground -- and our transportation on the ground -- at the same time recognizing that the future developments in the art of warfare may very well have the Chaplain up in the air, literally.

Dipping into the history of the Army Chaplaincy we find that Chaplains have been confronted with transportation problems from the very beginning. Chaplains attending upon the spiritual and moral needs of American Colonists serving with the British in the French and Indian Wars depended upon strong lower appendages to keep up with and minister to their compatriots, unless, perchance, it was their good fortune to possess a horse. Shelter against the elements, too, depended upon personal ownership or possession

of tentage. Services, prayer meetings, and such other ministrations to their charges were conducted under the open sky or beneath such shelter as was available -- a situation relatively unchanged down to the present under combat or simulated combat conditions.

In the early days of the American Revolution the Chaplain enjoyed the same privilege and convenience of riding his military circuit, if he provided his own mount. Official recognition of the Army Chaplain in the year 1791 made no provision for "government transportation" nor for tentage. Ecclesiastical impedimenta, too, was left to the Chaplain's own devices.

That transportation was no small problem in that day is evidenced by the fact that a single Chaplain was obliged to cover as many as three Regiments or a Brigade, though with the organization of the US Army following the Revolution one Chaplain was to be assigned to each of the four peacetime regiments. A noteworthy development of the time was that in addition to his pay (\$40.00 per month) and personal ration, it was ordained that the Chaplain would also receive forage for one horse -- his own. While the circumstances of that period in our nation's history necessitated mobilization and then demobilization, the status of the Chaplain also vacillated as to his rank and his responsibilities -- and privileges -- but Congress remained constant in providing forage for one horse, if he had a horse.¹ (From lack of evidence to the contrary, it may be deduced that he continued to supply his own tentage or sleep in the open when in the field.)

1. Roy J. Honeywell, Chaplains of the United States Army,
U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1958, p.76

In the War between the States the role of the Chaplain was greatly enhanced in both the Union and the Confederate Armies. Most Chaplains were mounted but still provided their own steeds, forage being provided as previously. Recognition of the importance of a more mobile clergy is evidenced by the experience of one Confederate Chaplain, who upon being denied a leave for a domestic emergency found little trouble in getting leave to return to his home to purchase a horse -- with funds, incidentally, raised by another Chaplain.

Another "Chaplain", a Roman Catholic priest, serving informally with the Army of the Potomac was provided not only with a horse but also a two-wheeled ambulance by General McClellan in lieu of pay. Later he purchased a rockaway to replace the ambulance and outfitted it to carry a chapel tent and portable altar, the better to minister to the Catholic men scattered throughout the several regiments he served. Thus we may note that the art of improvisation is not new in the Army.

It was in World War I that the Army Chaplain first found himself in a government saddle on a government mount, but while horses were normally available to the Chaplain in the ZI, they were seldom available where they were most needed -- in the overseas theater of operations. On occasion the WWI Chaplain was fortunate to hitch a ride in a motorcycle or car, but there was no motorized vehicle regularly assigned him. In fact, due to the condition of the roads because of weather and repeated shellings, transportation by horse was surer and swifter more often than not than was the horseless carriage of pre-1918 vintage.

By the advent of World War II Chaplains were provided with the same general equipage as to tentage , office and horse furnishings as were officers of corresponding rank in their own units. Tables of Organization and Equipment provided for vehicular transportation and for an enlisted assistant to serve as a driver -- in addition to his other duties -- soon after WW II began.

Christopher Cross, in his book "Soldiers of God", describes one of the early experiments with adapting truck and trailer to meet the requirements of the WW II Chaplain in the field: "The traveling church is a model of mobile efficiency. It consists of a truck and trailer arrangement, with large crosses painted on the sides and back doors to identify it as a religious vehicle. The ecclesiastical equipment includes a folding altar which may be set up with dignity and decency on the lowered windshield of a jeep; a portable pump organ, weighing 50 pounds; Catholic Mass and Protestant communion kits; bibles, candlesticks and a public address system. The traveling church can reach about 2,000 people, and its equipment, compact and collapsible, can be on the march on short notice." The jeep and trailer authorized Chaplains in TOE organizations by Circular 81 in 1944 met the requirements of the Chaplain for the type of warfare engaged upon in WW II and later in Korea. Variations on the aforementioned "traveling church" appeared throughout the Army in every theater of operations, depending upon the ingenuity of the individual Chaplain or his enlisted assistant.

2. Christopher Cross, Soldiers of God, New York, E.P. Dutton & Co., 1945, p. 86

The primary requirement for transportation has come through a long period of development not without some struggle, and the end product, as of presently and for conventional warfare, enabled the WW II Chaplain to keep up with and minister to his military charges in a generally exemplary manner. Wherever the Chaplain was needed, he was there, thanks to his devotion to his calling and to his usually reliable quarter ton four by four.

But as we have indicated earlier in this paper, the picture has changed with the enlarged death-dealing fist of modern nuclear weapons. Greater dispersion of our fighting forces on the nuclear battlefield, wider fronts and greater depth, increased difficulties of communication, the high degree of mobility, all have magnified the Chaplain's problem of giving adequate coverage to the units and personnel to whom he is responsible for moral and spiritual guidance and support. As has been suggested, a study of the Chaplain's requirements for transportation on the nuclear battlefield is indicated.

Following the experience at Yakima Firing Range, cited at the beginning of this paper, the writer entered into several discussions with the division Chaplain and other colleagues in the division concerning the many problems encountered during Exercise Indian River, and among those problems none was more serious than that of mobility. The experience of the writer had been more or less typical, though his was the most embarrassing. Out of these discussions grew the consensus that the Chaplain needs a more mobile unit which will permit him to carry office, chapel impedimenta, and sleeping accommodations with him wherever he may go.

Such a unit would have to be ready to move on a moments notice and should be capable of negotiating the roughest of roads and open terrain when necessary. Again, the consensus was that the Chaplain's vehicle should be a single unit, not too large and cumbersome but at the same time not so small as to render itself inadequate for want of space.

One recommendation, which warranted some consideration as a "field expedient", was that a field ambulance be converted by the removal of litter racks and the installation of necessary file cabinets, folding desks, and folding cots. However, when plans were drawn up it was soon seen that such a plan was not feasible and that an entirely new vehicle would be desirable. (This conclusion was born out a year later in Korea when a field ambulance was made available to the same division Chaplain for experimentation. The Chaplain was returned to CONUS before the experiment could be thoroughly worked out, but the preliminary results were disappointing.)

Pursuing the aforementioned consensus and recommendations, the writer consulted with an engineer and designer as to the possibility and feasibility of mounting a van-type body on a 3/4 ton, 4 X 4, chassis. The resultant plans looked good -- on paper, at least -- and appeared to be a reasonable and practical solution to the problem. The dimensions of the van were to be only slightly larger than those of the Army field ambulance, but the arrangement of built-in cabinets, desk, cots, and storage space for clothing, personal gear, and literature gave the appearance of adequate, uncramped space. Included in the van plans were a movable portable altar and folding, accordion wings,

which, when extended from the rear of the vehicle, would provide a "Chapel" and cover for a congregation of up to ten men.

Such a Chaplain's Van would be a considerable improvement over the present jeep and trailer and would meet most of the requirements for mobility and convenience. With such a vehicle the Chaplain would be able to take the Chapel to his men and conduct services on location, as will be necessitated under the conditions of the nuclear battlefield, where it will be impossible to assemble any large number of men in a given area. Not to be overlooked is the fact that with the office immediately available, the Chaplain's assistant would be able to avail himself of the time, which he would normally waste sitting around waiting for the Chaplain, to perform the clerical duties, which seem to accrue while he is functioning as a driver. It is anticipated that in a nuclear war there will be a considerable increase in casualties requiring an increased amount of letters of sympathy and condolence, while at the same time the demands upon the Chaplain's assistant as a driver will increase. The paradox occasioned by these divergent demands would be largely offset by the increase in his productive hours.

However, while a van would answer many of the problems of transportation, its disadvantages become rather obvious when one considers the possibility of exposure to enemy nuclear weapons. Protection against the blast and radiation effects of a nuclear explosion would be practically nil in such a vehicle. Furthermore, while a 3/4 ton truck can negotiate extremely rough roads and some open country, it must be considered more or less

roadbound, which fact might be a serious handicap in a fluid situation. Certainly it would be a handicap where a Chaplain is assigned to a highly mobile armored or mechanized unit where the emphasis is upon speed, mobility, and flexibility and where the vehicles of the unit lay their own "roadways" by means of their tracks. Under such circumstances the Chaplain might very well find himself equipped with a fine type mobile office, "Chapel", and "home" but nevertheless unable to keep up with and follow his parish.

Under such circumstances the idea of a 3/4 ton van would necessarily yield to a tracked vehicle, and such a vehicle is available. The Armored Personnel Carrier -- the M59 and newer M113 -- while designed as a personnel carrier could be converted to meet the Chaplain's requirements by the relatively simple process of installing the necessary furnishings.

However, in that the APC is normally a crew served vehicle, it is possible that an additional enlisted man would have to be assigned to the Chaplain's section as a driver, whose primary responsibility would be for first echelon care and maintenance of the vehicle. The assigned Chaplain's assistant would share in the care and maintenance and serve as an assistant driver, the meanwhile performing clerical and other duties as of the present.

Because of the cost of an APC it is problematical that this panacea for the Chaplain's problems involved in the area of transportation would be looked upon with favor -- particularly

in a time of austerity -- however desirable or necessary it may appear to be. In spite of the cost obstacle the fact remains that the Chaplain, armed though he may be with "the shield of faith" and "the helmet of salvation", is not impervious to the weapons of modern warfare and cannot be expected to carry out the duties normally expected of him on the battlefield with anything less than the best protection available. The 3rd Armored Division has recognized this premise to the extent of giving the mission of transportation of the unit Chaplain to the Medics in their APC's, and similar arrangements might be made in other organizations. However, it is but a partial answer to the Chaplain's problem and no real solution in that it ties the Chaplain down to the Medics and permits him little freedom to carry out other facets of his mission.

Our conclusions become rather obvious, though the implementation of them may be yet afar off. The Chaplain's jeep and trailer upon which he presently depends for transportation for himself and his equipment cannot meet the exigencies of the nuclear battlefield. He must have a vehicle which will meet the changed conditions occasioned by nuclear weapons, a highly mobile vehicle capable of affording him maximum protection where the action is the heaviest and the needs for his services the greatest. Of the vehicles available, the Armored Personnel Carrier is the answer.

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